



Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS

—supporting families with kids who have hearing loss—

JULY/AUGUST 2007

Child's hearing loss

Mom grieves loss of dream; learns to appreciate new path

By Laura Godfrey,
Minnesota Hands & Voices Parent Guide

When my husband and I found out that we were expecting it was one of the happiest days of our lives. There was no reason to think our son would be anything less than a perfect, gorgeous baby. We found the perfect name, bought the perfect furniture, and made sure we read all the "What to Expect..." books. We thought we knew exactly what to expect.

But all that changed on the evening of Aug. 11, 2002. After our son's heart rate began to drop during my contractions, the doctors performed an emergency Cesarean Section. Our baby spent the next two weeks in the NICU. Just before we were ready to take him home, we found out that he failed his hearing test.

All kinds of ridiculous thoughts came rushing through my head. Those thoughts at first seemed valid. But, the more I thought about them, I saw they were based on how I had seen children with hearing loss treated when I was young. Kids can be cruel; we all have heard that a million times. But now I was in a position to have to deal with what I perceived to be insurmountable odds. Would he be smart? Would he be successful? Would he find the love of his life? These are all things every parent worries about, but now seemed magnified a hundred times when I thought about my innocent little baby who couldn't hear.

It did not seem fair. Everything was supposed to be so perfect. What did I do to deserve this? My dreams seemed out of reach. I could not rationalize past my simple two-dimensional view of the world. There were so many moments in the early days of my son's life where I wondered why I couldn't be stronger—why I was having a hard time handling this.

I came to realize that I am not alone in my reaction to discovering my son's hearing loss. What I was going through was not unlike the grieving process

associated with any major loss.

Ted Bowman, an independent consultant on grief who lives here in the Twin Cities, wrote a book entitled "Loss of Dreams: A Special Kind of Grief." In it, he defines the loss of a dream as "losing an emotionally important image of one's self—the loss of ... an assumption one has of their lives."

When I found out about my son's hearing loss, I was saddened and felt cheated until I realized that it wasn't my son's hearing loss that I was grieving. I was grieving the loss of expectations I had.

Bowman offers several suggestions to ease the grieving process (see the box to the right). Some of his suggestions seem like common sense, but when you are thrown into a situation where you have created a picture of your future in your head and it is dashed away, it is hard to think clearly. Reading a list of suggestions like this can help.

In my situation, something inside me told me that I had to search for what a new dream should look like, now that things had been framed outside of what I was expecting. I needed some direction, some support, someone who had gone through what I am going through and could tell me that everything was going to be okay. At the time, I found out about groups like Minnesota Hands & Voices and Early Childhood and Family Development. Before my son was born I could not have imagined reaching out to groups of strangers for insight and comfort. But these groups were not only helped me grieve over the loss of my dream, but also gave me the courage and leadership skills to help other new parents create new dreams with their children.

We all have our own ways of dealing with the loss of a dream. The process is not that different from dealing with the loss of a loved one. The guidance of someone who has walked that path can make all the difference in the world.

As parents of children who have

See you at our annual picnic
Aug. 16—details on Page 5.

hearing loss, we are all on a path that is less traveled. Thankfully, there are others with us on this path. And, while we may have started on this journey faced with the loss of a dream, there's no reason this path can't be even more enriching than the one we had expected to take.

Steps for grieving the loss of a dream:

- **Name your loss.**
Putting the loss into words helps to define your experience.
- **Grieve the loss of dreams.**
Let yourself grieve. It is important in the healing process.
- **Know what you are giving up.**
Know what you have lost and be honest with yourself about it.
- **Keep dreaming.**
Dreaming is the foundation of hope.
- **Know that you are not alone.**
There are many others who have gone through or are going through similar experiences.
- **Build on your support system.**
Find friends and family that are supportive of what you are going through. Let them know what you are experiencing.

Source: "Loss of Dreams: A Special Kind of Grief" by Ted Bowman

Here's What's Happening Around Town

Saturday,
July 21

Cue at the Zoo with families who cue, too. Meet at Como Park Zoo in St. Paul. A transliterator will cue the 11:30 a.m. Sparky show. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy after the show. For more information contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.

Tuesdays,
July 24 & 31

The Merriam Park Branch Library (1831 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul) hosts **ASL-interpreted performances** at 2 p.m. The Big Fun Show comes on the 24th. The show on the 31st is Dakota Wild Animals. For more information, call 651-642-0385 (v) or 651-298-4184 (tty).

Thursday,
July 26

Participate in a discussion from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Merriam Park Library meeting room, 1831 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul, **about airport accessibility** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. Rick McPherson from the Disability Law Center will talk about how airports in California improved their accessibility. Pizza, CART (captioning), and interpreters provided by MCDHH - Minnesota Commission Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing People. RSVP to Kelly Murphy at 651-297-1394 or Kelly.murphy@state.mn.us.

Mondays,
July 30, Aug. 6
& 13

Kids 8-15 can learn to golf through a class offered by CSD-MN and St. Paul Parks and Recreation. The class runs from 8:45 to 10:15 a.m. at Highland Golf Course in St. Paul. Cost is \$15. Students can bring their own clubs or use those provided. Register by Friday, July 20. Contact Mary Livingston at 651-266-6366 (v), -6378 (tty) or mary.livingston@ci.stpaul.mn.us or Jessalyn Frank at 651-487-8872 (tty) or jfrank@c-s-d.org.

August 2-12

Minnesota Fringe Festival in Minneapolis offers ASL-interpreted and captioned performances during the 10-day multi-venue theatrical festival. For a complete list of accessible shows, see www.fringefestival.org.

Saturday,
Aug. 4

Cue S'More Night at Lebanon Hills in Apple Valley starts at 7 p.m. S'more fixings provided by the Cued Speech Association of Minnesota. Families interested in camping can make arrangements with the park office directly at 651-688-1376.

Sundays,
August 5 &
Sept. 9

ASL-interpreted tours at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts begin at 1 p.m. by the Information Desk in the museum lobby. **August 5** is "Cityscapes, Landscapes, and Escapes." **Sept. 9** is "Cherchez la Femme: Women in Art." For details, call Visitor and Member Services at 612-870-3131 (v) or 612-870-3132 (tty) or e-mail dhegstro@artsmia.org.

Monday,
Aug. 13

Northern Voices' 6th Annual Charity Golf Tournament and Silent Auction takes place at St. Croix National Golf Course in Somerset, Wis. Registration forms are online at www.northernvoices.org, or call Erin at 651-639-2535.

Thursday,
Aug. 16

Join us for our annual Family Picnic at Como Park. Friends to meet, dinner to eat, games to play, prizes to give away! RSVP to Minnesota Hands & Voices. See Page 5 for details.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Ask for VSA discount!

1776

7:30 p.m. Friday, July 27 & Thursday, Aug. 16
The Aug. 16 show also will be captioned.
Guthrie Theater, 818 2nd Street S., Mpls.; 612-377-2224, -6626.(tty); www.guthrietheater.org/visit/the_building/access_services

Monty Python's Spamalot

Friday, August 3, 8 p.m.
Ordway Center, 345 Washington, St. Paul;
651-224-4222; www.ordway.org/services/access.asp

Pirates of Penzance

Friday, August 10, 9 p.m. FREE
New Hope Outdoor Theatre, 4401 Xylon
Ave. N.; www.ci.new-hope.mn.us

Private Lives

Saturday, Aug. 11, 1 p.m. &
Friday, Aug. 17, 7:30 p.m.
Guthrie Theater, 818 2nd Street S., Mpls.; 612-377-2224, -6626.(tty); www.guthrietheater.org/visit/the_building/access_services

Sherlock's Last Case

Friday, Aug. 17, 8 p.m.
University of Minnesota Showboat at Harriet
Island; www.ShowboatTheater.com

Minnesota State Fair

Aug. 23 - Sept. 3
ASL interpreters for Grandstand Shows must
be requested two weeks in advance. Call
651-288-4427 or 651-642-2442 (tty) or e-mail
tickets@mnstatefair.org. For performance
schedule, see www.mnstatefair.org.

A Little Night Music

Saturday, Sept. 1, 7:30 p.m.
Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W.
Old Shakopee Road; 952-563-8587;
www.bloomingtonartcenter.com

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Our mission is to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing parent-to-parent support.

Newsletter Editor: Audrey Alwell

Information in this newsletter about events, services, or other organizations does not imply endorsement by Minnesota Hands & Voices or Lifetrack Resources.

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies,
Minnesota Hands & Voices Coordinator

Summer is a wonderful time to slow down the pace a bit and spend some quality time with our children. Mornings can be a little less hectic and evenings are a wonderful chance to get outside and enjoy some family activities. Ah, my favorite time of year. And, my favorite tradition is the family vacation.

Just recently, my husband and I were able to take our family to Washington D.C. and the surrounding area—something we had been planning for years. Having visited the city as a couple a dozen times, we always dreamed of showing our kids this incredible town when they were old enough to appreciate its rich history. It was truly satisfying to watch our son, who is deaf, soak up all the information from the Smithsonian exhibits and tours of Yorktown and Jamestown. He would often add his own comments, based on having just studied American History in school.

In fact, during a tour of Mt. Vernon, our tour guide stumped all the children and adults with a question. Up shot my son's hand as soon as the question was interpreted for him. However, it was too late. The tour guide waited an appropriate amount of time for a response, then moved on to supply the answer. But it was a moment too late for Luke to shine. The pause in her speech was taken up with the time needed for the interpreter to finish the question. This experience reminded me that our kids with hearing loss still don't gain equal access. There is still that delay as whatever communication access tool catches up with the speaker. Our kids still laugh just a second too late or raise their hand just a moment after a typical hearing kid blurts out the answer. That is something I am eager to see changed.

Just the next day, I was reminded of the fundamental right of "access" again. After touring the Lincoln Memorial and standing on the very spot that Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, I bought a book of his quotes. One really struck a chord. He said, "A right delayed is a right denied."

I thought back on all the times when my son's rights were delayed and he had to wait... for newly released films to be captioned... for an interpreter to be arranged for a tour.... I realized that these are only small rights denied. There are days ahead when the issues will be bigger. So, it makes me dig in my heels and prepare for the future. We have come so far, and the recent successes in MN legislation are a clear example of how much better it is today for our children. At the same time, we need to keep Martin Luther King's words close.

Before summer comes to a close, I hope that you will share one of your summer evenings with us. On Thursday, August 16th, we will once again gather at Como Park in St. Paul. We have a magician, Magic Norm, entertaining us. I think you'll enjoy socializing with new acquaintances and catching up with old friends. I look forward to seeing you there.

Mary Hartnett receives state honor

Mary Hartnett of the Minnesota Commission Serving Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons (MCDHH) has been selected to receive the Odyssey Policy Award at the Minnesota 2007 Age & Disabilities Odyssey conference Aug. 20 in Duluth.

Hartnett was nominated by Candace Lindow-Davies, Minnesota Hands & Voices Coordinator, for her dedication to improving the lives of people in the state who are deaf or hard of hearing. The award, which is sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Board on Aging, recognizes an organization or individual that has demonstrated public policy leadership that has resulted in improving the quality of life for elders, people with disabilities, and their communities. Hartnett spearheaded the efforts that recently led to the historic passage of a record number of bills tied to hearing loss that were before the state Legislature, including one that helps fund Parent Guides through Minnesota Hands & Voices to help families with babies who have hearing loss.

Northern Voices picks new director

Northern Voices, an oral school for the deaf, recently announced that Kristina Blaiser will be the new Executive Director beginning in August.

Blaiser has been working with children with hearing loss since 1996. After earning her BA from the Department of Communication Disorders at University of Wisconsin-Madison, she received her MA in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Minnesota.

Blaiser is currently working on her PhD in Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences at the University of Minnesota. She has worked at the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, as the Senior Aural Rehabilitation Specialist. She has also worked with the Colorado Home Intervention Program and was the Program Coordinator for the D/HH Program at Denver Children's Hospital.

Northern Voices, located in Roseville, is the only non-profit school in Minnesota offering children who are deaf and hard of hearing an opportunity to listen and talk through individualized instruction. The goal at Northern Voices is for students to become fluent users of spoken language enabling them to join their hearing peers in a traditional classroom at their neighborhood schools.

Look online for listings of captioned movies

Looking for the latest "Harry Potter" movie with captions? The Marcus Theatre in Oakdale will have it Aug. 10-12. The movie will be showing at other theaters in the Twin Cities, too—some even have it now, thanks to rear-window captioning. You can stay on top of open-captioned movies in your area by signing up for email reminders at these websites:

Oakdale Marcus Theatre:
www.marcustheatres.com/opencaption.cfm

Kerasotes in Coon Rapids and Inver Grove Heights:
www.kerasotes.com/OpenCaptioning.aspx

Regal Cinemas in Eagan and Brooklyn Center:
www.regalcinemas.com/movies/open_cap.html

Other theaters have rear-window captioning systems and show newly released films. These include the new AMC Theatres in Roseville, AMC in Eden Prairie, Marcus in Duluth, and Crown in downtown Minneapolis. For links to these, plus listings for *all* accessible films, see www.mnocfilms.org.

Audiologist offers tips for parents working with kids' hearing aids, cochlear implants

We have talked to many parents who've had the same concerns about taking care of their children's hearing aids or cochlear implants. So, we asked Diana van Deusen, MA, CCC-A, an audiologist with St. Paul Public Schools, to answer these questions.

"I always check my daughter's hearing aids by making sure they "squeal" before I put them in her ears. Should I do anything else to be sure her hearing aids are working properly?"

Yes! That "squealing" or feedback that you are hearing is only a sign that something is working. The aids could sound horrible and still give feedback. I recommend that every parent invest in two pieces of equipment to help them troubleshoot their children's hearing aids: a battery tester and a hearing aid stethoscope. Both can be purchased from your hearing aid dispenser for about \$10. The battery tester is handy for times when you don't hear the feedback after inserting the battery. Is it the battery or the hearing aid? Sometimes even new batteries can be dead. The hearing aid stethoscope allows you to listen to the hearing aid. Does it sound clear, distorted or crackly? Does the sound cut in and out? Is it still as loud as it was when it was fit? Sometimes, when a child rejects his/her hearing aid, it is because it sounds terrible!

"How can parents listen to a cochlear implant?"

Parents can purchase a headset to monitor the microphones of their child's cochlear implant, but that won't tell you if the speech processor is working, or if the child is hearing anything. Audiologists recommend that parents and teachers perform the Ling 6 sound test with their children when they put on their speech processors each morning. Six English sounds were chosen to span the low, mid and high-pitched parts of speech: 'mm,' 'ah,' 'oo,' 'ee,' 'sh,' 'ss.' If the child can correctly repeat all six sounds (without watching the speaker's mouth), the speech processor is representing all frequencies accurately. Be sure to change the order of the sounds, so your child cannot correctly guess out of habit. Also, it is a good idea to add in a "no sound" trial, as children quickly learn to guess "ss" (the softest sound) when they hear nothing!

A Minnesota mom, Rhonda DeBough-Insook, has created a book to capture the milestones and memories for babies with special needs. "A Very Special Baby Book" has archival-quality pages decorated with watercolor images and headings such as "My Birth Story," "My Diagnosis," and "My Growth Chart." For more details, see the book's recently updated website: averyspecialbabybook.com.



The View from Here

Southeast:

"The Mystery of Irma Vep," a play by the Commonwealth Theatre, will have an ASL interpreter for the 2 p.m. performance Sunday, July 29. Tickets will be half the regular price of \$25 (\$6 with student half-price rate). Call 507-467-2525, 800-657-7025, or email tickets@commonwealththeatre.org. The performance will be at Saint Mane Theatre, 206 Parkway Ave. N. in downtown Lanesboro. For a description of the play, see www.commonwealththeatre.org.

East/West Central:

A potluck picnic for families with kids who are deaf or hard of hearing takes place Saturday, July 21 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Rice Park in Willmar. A balloon artist will teach kids how to make balloon animals. For more details, contact lisa.hennen@state.mn.us or 320-255-3690.

Upper Northwest:

The Trollwood Performing Arts School's performance of "Thoroughly Modern Millie" Friday, July 20 at 8:15 p.m. will have an ASL interpreter. The play will be in Trollwood Park, 200 Kandi Lane, Fargo. Tickets are available at Hornbacher's, at the gate or Fargo Stuff (www.fargostuff.com). For more information, call 701-241-4799 or go to www.trollwood.org.

St. Paul schools offer interpreted driver's ed

St. Paul Public Schools Community Education will offer driver education classes with ASL interpreters July 23 through Aug. 10 (Monday through Friday, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.) at Johnson High School, 1349 Arcade Street, St. Paul. The cost is \$295 for St. Paul residents or district students and \$305 for all other students. Thirty hours of classroom and six hours of behind-the-wheel training are included in the fee. The deadline for registering is Thursday, July 19. For a registration form or more information, see www.commedprograms.spps.org and click on "Driver Education" or call Community Education at Central High School at 651-632-6020.

New website tells daily news in ASL

A new website, www.NetSignNews.com, offers free access to the day's headline news in American Sign Language. The site also covers sports, weather and other news on a subscription basis. While the news anchors sign, the site also provides voice-over. NetSignNews.com is a production of the Deaf Broadcast Network which provides subscription service to the Daily News program for \$12.95 month or \$10.95 monthly with a one year subscription.

Another site with signed news stories is i711.com. This site also includes written features.

Both sites offer great practice in receiving ASL!



A Little Grin

This issue's Grin fits with the theme of grieving the loss of a dream—it might not make you smile, but it might strike a chord as it did with all of us at Minnesota Hands & Voices.

By Melissa McNamer
Minnesota Hands & Voices Parent Guide

Recently my 3-1/2-year-old son has been trying to figure out when he won't need to wear his hearing aids any longer. I've tried to explain to him that he won't grow out of them. His hearing will not change, and he will always need his hearing aids to hear better. Still, he's only 3-1/2 and it's hard for him to understand. He has commented that "when I'm 4 like Seth (his friend), I won't need my hearing aids." Or, on another occasion, he said, "when I'm a Dad, I won't need hearing aids."

So, while we try to explain this so he will understand it, we are again saddened that he's starting to notice the reality of his hearing loss and what it means. But, at the same time, I wonder, is he right? Maybe he won't need his hearing aids. Will he decide to change his communication mode down the road? Will there be new technology and he won't have to "wear" his hearing aids?

With every moment of sadness there is also a glimmer of hope and an opportunity for optimism. If we just take a moment to listen to or look at our children and hear what they are saying, we may just see that they could be right.

Cochlear implant surgery to be shown live online

You can watch via the Internet as surgeons at Tampa General Hospital perform cochlear implant surgery live at 5 p.m. central time July 26 on www.OR-Live.com. The surgery will be explained as it happens.

As an alternative learning tool, a video of CI surgery without narration can be downloaded from www.tampabayhearing.com/VideoCochlearImplant.aspx. Several other medical centers have video on their websites. These include www.lifespan.org/staywell/videosurgery.htm; and, cochlearimplants.med.miami.edu/medical/09_Video%20-%20Minimal%20Incision%20Surgery.asp?video=yes. YouTube also has videos of people having cochlear implant surgery.

John Tracy dies at 82

The man who inspired the creation of the John Tracy Clinic for oral education of children with hearing loss died last month at age 82.

John Tracy was the son of actor Spencer Tracy and his wife, Louise, who founded the clinic in 1942, providing free services to parents of hearing-impaired infants and preschool children around the world through correspondence courses and locally through the Los Angeles clinic.

Tracy had Usher Syndrome, a genetic disease that affects hearing and vision. He attended the Clarke School in Massachusetts, the Progressive School in Hollywood, and the Wright Oral School in New York City. He graduated from Pasadena City College and attended Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. A number of years later, he also attended Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. He married Nadine in 1953, and had one child, Joseph, who lives in California with his wife, Cyndi, and their three children.

New book has deaf character

A just-released historical novel, "Copper Star," includes a character who is deaf and learning to lip-read and speak through correspondence classes from the John Tracy Clinic.

Written by Suzanne Woods Fisher, "Copper Star" portrays a young German resistance worker waiting out World War II in an Arizona copper mining town where she uncovers a mystery that leads her back to the Nazis and her war-torn country.

FAMILY PICNIC!

For families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Thursday, August 16

5:00 - 8:30 p.m. (Rain or Shine)

Como Park Midway Pavilion South

(Midway Parkway and Horton Avenue in St. Paul)

Free for the Family:

- Dinner at 5:30 p.m.
- Face Painting & Games
- Temporary Tattoos
- Magical Entertainer Norm Barnhart
- Door Prizes!

Also at Como Park:

- Zoo and Conservatory (Open 10-6)
- Cafesjian Carousel (Open 11-4)
- Amusement Rides (Open 10-8)
- Mini Golf (Open 12-6)

For more information about Como Park, Zoo, or Conservatory call 651/487-8200 or visit www.comozooconservatory.org



Please RSVP by Monday, August 13th!



709 University Avenue West • St. Paul, MN 55104-4804
651/265-2435 (voice) • 651/265-2379 (TTY)
1-866-DHOHKID (toll-free) • 1-866-857-2379 (toll-free TTY)
www.familysupportconnection.org



Off the Shelf

By Laura Godfrey
Minnesota Hands & Voices Parent Guide

We have several resources in our library to help you deal with the emotional aspects of having a child with a hearing loss.

“When Your Child is Deaf: A Guide For Parents,” by David M. Luterman with Mark Ross, gives information, advice and encouragement and includes a description of audiological procedures and amplifying systems. Luterman also has written “Deafness in the Family,” describing how families may be affected by a deaf or hard of hearing child-member. Interviews with families about their experiences provide insight into how families function in the face of adversity.

“Life After Deaf: Impact of Deafness on a Family,” by Jeanette Frederickson, tells one mother’s story of how she came to terms with her daughter’s deafness. The author lives in Minnesota.

“Good Grief” is a video, designed for professionals, that shows parents of deaf and hard of hearing children participating in a grief support group. These scenarios provide viewers with an overview of the grief process, ways to be more supportive, and information on how to generate a parent support network. Voiced and captioned.

To make a library request, go to www.familysupportconnection.org or call 651-265-2372 or 1-866-346-4543.

ASL featured in music video

D-PAN, the Deaf Performing Artists Network, an organization founded to help deaf and hard-of-hearing people make inroads in the entertainment industry, has launched its second video, an ASL interpretation of John Mayer’s song “Waiting on the World to Change.” To read about D-PAN and see the music video, go to www.d-pan.com.

Researchers say new device outshines cochlear implant

A new type of implant that transmits a wider range of sounds to the brain than cochlear implants is being developed at the University of Michigan Kresge Hearing Research Institute.

In the June issue of the *Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology*, the researchers describe how they implanted a tiny, ultra-thin electrode array directly in the auditory nerve of deafened cats. When they compared brain responses to auditory signals, the direct nerve implant outperformed the cochlear implant. Tones as low as 0.6 kHz were detected, while sound detection with a cochlear implant stopped around 7 kHz.

Because the auditory nerve implant’s electrode array sits directly on the nerve fibers, it provides more precise stimulation, the researchers explained. An additional advantage of this intimate contact is that the device requires less power, which could eliminate the need for an external battery pack and allow the device to be fully implantable.

... it provides more precise stimulation ...
(and) requires less power ...

The auditory nerve implant potentially could benefit not only people who could use a cochlear implant, but also those whose cochlea is missing or damaged since the device bypasses the cochlea and directly stimulates the hearing nerve.

Researchers now are studying the long-term effects of the device on the auditory nerve in animals. If the studies continue to go well, the device should be ready for tests in humans in “no less than five years,” the researchers said. The device would potentially be ready for marketing within 10 years.

The title of the research article in last month’s *Journal* is “Auditory Prosthesis with a Penetrating Nerve Array.” The authors are John C. Middlebrooks, a University of Michigan Medical School professor of otolaryngology and biomedical engineering, and, Russell L. Snyder of the University of California-San Francisco, and Utah State University. The study is funded by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, a section of the National Institutes of Health.

Video ‘instant messaging’ lets users see each other, chat

The latest buzz on the Internet is live two-way video communication, which lets users see each other and carry on a conversation—perfect for users who sign or cue! The technology builds on the Instant Messaging phenomenon, creating a whole new way to connect with friends and family that’s especially popular with teens and young adults.

The creators of Camfrog, a free computer program that allows real-time two-way video and audio communication over the Internet, say that thousands of people who are deaf now use their site. By downloading free Camfrog software, users can sign or cue to each other through the live video link between their computers. Users can connect with one person at a time in complete privacy or they can join a public video chat room for group discussions.

Camfrog (www.camfrog.com) started in 2003. Users must have either an external webcam or camera built into their computer and high-speed Internet service such as broadband or DSL. Camfrog works with Windows XP, Windows Vista and Apple Mac OS X.

Like Instant Messaging, the free version of Camfrog lets users view photos and profiles of other members and keep a “friends” list to see who is online. The Pro version, which costs \$49.95, allows users to see many video windows at once, send files, and increase the size of video windows. Both versions let users block unwanted contacts.

Camfrog users can make their own chat rooms or join existing audio and video chat rooms hosted around the world. The most popular room for signing on Camfrog is the “SignLanguage” room.

Other software programs on the Internet for two-way video communication are designed more for business video conferencing or adult entertainment. Camfrog seems to be the one embraced by the Deaf community for easy communication.